The conference benefited from the vast Indian experience which was shared in the discussions, and many of the recommendations of the Action Plan reflect this Indian contribution.

(c) The conference recommended seeking flexibility for developing countries in Intellectual property rights, relecting the general demand of developing countries world wide at the WTO and other fera.

Opening of a Mission School in Oman

5311. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the Hindustan Time dated the 26th April, 2002 under the caption "Indian Mission's schools for scandal".

(b) whether Oman Government have indicated Indian Exmassy in Oman for having allowed an Indian to open a private school against the laws of that country;

(c) what is the in-built mechanism to check and control misuse of influence in his Ministry to aviod reoccurrence of such cases; and

(b) the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Cultural Heritages in the vaults of Imperial Powers

5312. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether several Indian cultural heritages are locked up in the vaults of imperial powers like U.K., Portugal and France;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken to procure them back?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Government is aware that some items of Indian cultural heritage are lying in museums in some foreign countries.

(c) Government is exploring ways and means for obtaining a satisfactory resolution of the matter.

South Asian Nation's Joint Action Plan to Combat Poverty

5313. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether SEVEN South Asian Nations on 9th April, 2002 agreed on a joint action plan to combat poverty in their impoverished region;

(b) if so, what were the other decisions taken in the meeting;

(c) whether the South Asian Nations have agreed to ask the developed nations for debt relief, greater market access for exports and removal of tariff and non-tariff trade barriers; and

(d) if so, to what extent these suggestions have been agreed upon by the developed countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Plan of Action listed sixteen recommendations on internal and external policies. Some of these recommendations include the need for good governance decentralization and empowerment of local governments' micro-credit facilities expansion of social safety nets and better targeting of benefits on both urban and rural poor.

On the external front the conference recommended asking developed countries for increased ODA, greater market access, reducing the burden of external borrowings and debts and preventing outflow of illegal and taxevaded money from the region.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The recommendations issued by the SAARC conference on Poverty Alleviation are issues that have often been raised at International fora like the UN, WTO etc. They are in the nature of on-going process of negotiations between developing and developed countries at various levels.